

To This Day

By Shane Koyczan

Directions: As you listen to the poem, highlight lines that jump out at you either because they create a feeling, include figurative language, or are just interesting to you.

When I was a kid
I used to think that pork chops and karate
chops
Were the same thing
I thought they were both pork chops
And because my grandmother thought it was
cute
And because they were my favorite
She let me keep doing it

Not really a big deal

One day
Before I realized fat kids are not designed to
climb trees
I fell out of a tree
And bruised the right side of my body

I didn't want to tell my grandmother about it
Because I was afraid I'd get in trouble
For playing somewhere that I shouldn't have
been

A few days later the gym teacher noticed the
bruise
And I got sent to the principal's office
From there I was sent to another small room
With a really nice lady
Who asked me all kinds of questions
About my life at home

I saw no reason to lie
As far as I was concerned
Life was pretty good
I told her, "Whenever I'm sad
My grandmother gives me karate chops"
This led to a full scale investigation
And I was removed from the house for three
days
Until they finally decided to ask how I got
the bruises

News of this silly little story quickly spread
through the school
And I earned my first nickname

Pork Chop

To this day
I hate pork chops

I'm not the only kid
Who grew up this way
Surrounded by people who used to say
That rhyme about sticks and stones
As if broken bones
Hurt more than the names we got called
And we got called them all
So we grew up believing no one
Would ever fall in love with us
That we'd be lonely forever
That we'd never meet someone
To make us feel like the sun
Was something they built for us
In their tool shed
So broken heart strings bled the blues
As we tried to empty ourselves
So we would feel nothing
Don't tell me that hurts less than a broken
bone
That an ingrown life
Is something surgeons can cut away
That there's no way for it to metastasize
It does
She was eight years old
Our first day of grade three
When she got called ugly
We both got moved to the back of the class
So we would stop get bombarded by spit
balls
But the school halls were a battleground

Name	Date	Hour
Where we found ourselves outnumbered day after wretched day We used to stay inside for recess Because outside was worse Outside we'd have to rehearse running away		He tried to kill himself in grade ten When a kid who could still go home to mom and dad Had the audacity to tell him "get over it" as if depression Is something that can be remedied By any of the contents found in a first aid kit To this day He is a stick of TNT lit from both ends Could describe to you in detail the way the sky bends In the moments before it's about to fall And despite an army of friends Who all call him an inspiration He remains a conversation piece between people Who can't understand Sometimes becoming drug free Has less to do with addiction And more to do with sanity
Or learn to stay still like statues giving no clues that we were there In grade five they taped a sign to her desk That read beware of dog		
To this day Despite a loving husband She doesn't think she's beautiful Because of a birthmark That takes up a little less than half of her face Kids used to say she looks like a wrong answer That someone tried to erase But couldn't quite get the job done And they'll never understand That she's raising two kids Whose definition of beauty Begins with the word mom Because they see her heart Before they see her skin Because she's only ever always been amazing		We weren't the only kids who grew up this way To this day Kids are still being called names The classics were Hey stupid Hey spaz Seems like each school has an arsenal of names Getting updated every year And if a kid breaks in a school And no one around chooses to hear Do they make a sound? Are they just the background noise Of a soundtrack stuck on repeat When people say things like Kids can be cruel? Every school was a big top circus tent And the pecking order went From acrobats to lion tamers From clowns to carnies All of these were miles ahead of who we were We were freaks Lobster claw boys and bearded ladies Oddities
He Was a broken branch Grafted onto a different family tree Adopted Not because his parents opted for a different destiny He was three when he became a mixed drink Of one part left alone And two parts tragedy Started therapy in 8th grade Had a personality made up of tests and pills Lived like the uphill were mountains And the downhill were cliffs Four fifths suicidal A tidal wave of anti depressants And an adolescence of being called popper One part because of the pills Ninety nine parts because of the cruelty		

Name	Date	Hour
<p>Juggling depression and loneliness playing solitaire spin the bottle Trying to kiss the wounded parts of ourselves and heal But at night While the others slept We kept walking the tightrope It was practice And yes Some of us fell</p>		<p>To show and tell but never told Because how can you hold your ground If everyone around you wants to bury you beneath it You have to believe that they were wrong</p>
<p>But I want to tell them That all of this shit Is just debris Leftover when we finally decide to smash all the things we thought We used to be And if you can't see anything beautiful about yourself Get a better mirror Look a little closer Stare a little longer Because there's something inside you That made you keep trying Despite everyone who told you to quit You built a cast around your broken heart And signed it yourself You signed it "They were wrong" Because maybe you didn't belong to a group or a clique Maybe they decided to pick you last for basketball or everything Maybe you used to bring bruises and broken teeth</p>		<p>They have to be wrong</p> <p>Why else would we still be here? We grew up learning to cheer on the underdog Because we see ourselves in them We stem from a root planted in the belief</p> <p>That we are not what we were called We are not abandoned cars stalled out and Sitting empty on a highway And if in some way we are Don't worry We only got out to walk and get gas We are graduating members from the class of F*** Off We Made It Not the faded echoes of voices crying out Names will never hurt me</p> <p>Of course They did</p> <p>But our lives will only ever always Continue to be A balancing act That has less to do with pain And more to do with beauty</p>

Name

Date

Hour

Directions: After we have listened to it, go back through what you highlighted. Cite five of the quotes you liked and identify what type of figurative language is being used (if any), then explain its meaning, significance, and why you chose this particular line(s) or stanza.

Quote	Identify figurative language (if any) explain meaning, significance or why this jumped out at you.

Name

Date

Hour